

Alternative Response Program

HELPING FAMILIES AT RISK



Program Description:

Alternative Response Services (ARS) is an intervention funded through a contract with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) that provides home visits by a Public Health Nurse (PHN) to families at risk for child abuse and neglect. The goal of the program is to prevent referral of the families to Child Protective Services (CPS) due to high risk behaviors. Services are authorized for a family in 90 day intervals, the maximum length of service may not exceed 18 months and a family may only access this service twice in a three year period.

Delivery Measures:

- 64 referrals were received in 2006
- 54 participants engaged in ARS services
- 238 total home visits were made
- 2 clients were referred to ARS services twice during the year
- 6 clients were referred back to CPS due to an increased assessment of risk for child abuse or neglect.

Notes and Updates:

Referrals are received from a CPS intake worker, and sent to ARS if they are assessed as low to moderate risk. Once referred to ARS, the PHN is expected to have face-to-face contact with clients within 10 working days. If no contact is made, the PHN is required to notify the CPS liaison that the family is unavailable or unwilling to meet. There must be at least two attempts to make a home visit, or to facilitate face to face contact, before a case can be closed. An Exit Summary is provided to CPS indicating the different levels of family participation, and the outcomes achieved when a case is closed.

Challenges:

- The PHN has no control over the referral process, and the size of the two county area can make it difficult to meet the 10 day face-to-face deadline.
- Due to a lack of statewide standardization of services, it is difficult to determine the efficacy of the outcome measures.
- Better data systems are needed. (While data is provided to the DSHS agency, almost no local data is available from them for our program use.)

Helping To Prevent Abuse